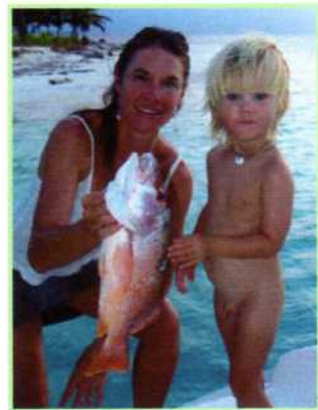


In bed, with my wife Melissa and BJ, we discuss the days activities and projects, though we know only a couple will be completed. Today, being Monday there will be 'pot luck' snacks and drinks at 1700 on BBQ island with the general rabble of nearby cruisers, I will try and start on the tender cover, BJ will need a run on his island, and Mel will probably be baking bread or muffins. The daily SSB radio schedule on 8107 Khz at 0830 will fill us in on the weather and other yacht movements plus all the

thick bush, small white sandy beaches and numerous palm trees, coconuts neatly piled. Yet some 60 kilometers away is a huge bustling city, firmly planted in the 21st Century and a canal of epic proportions. There can be few places in the world where the cruising yachtsperson can enjoy such pristine cruising, an almost untouched culture of immense historical importance and yet within a few hours drive be back in the modern world.



Another miraculous catch...

Kuna Yala is the autonomous northern coastal region of Panama stretching some 200 nautical miles from the Columbian border in the East to the Gulf of San Blas in the West. Most of the indigenous Kuna live on inshore coastal islands of which some 40 are heavily populated, the

could spend several months without visiting the same anchorage, we have met a few cruisers that have been around the area, on and off, for several years.

We hear the sound of Benjamin trying to manually pump the toilet, it's 0630 on another grey and blustery day in paradise. Benjamin or BJ is just 29 months old and, to our complete surprise, has recently decided that nappies are out. Strange, how, in a life that is definitely in the slow lane, time seems to pass so quickly, he is growing up far too hastily. I give him a hand and then, as usual, put the electric kettle on for a cup of tea, wander outside to have a pee, put the flag up and see what the day will bring. All appears as it has for the last two weeks, a palm fringed sandy island lies 100 metres to windward, the several yachts in the 'Swimming hole' are still there along with the dozen behind 'Bug Island'.

« Rickety jetties are everywhere along with a ubiquitous thatched enclosure at the end – a toilet. »

local bits of cruising news, perhaps some spear fishing will, as has been the habit, provide a nice mackerel dinner. In between there will be the usual social calls particularly if another Australian yacht sees our tattered Ozzie flag. By 1100 the sun will be shining with a steady 15 knot trade wind from the East, North East as it has been for the last 5 months – truly paradise !

remainder either have one or two caretaking families or are visited infrequently to gather coconuts. While the whole coast has interesting cruising the majority of yachts remain in the western quarter where the outlying fringe reefs provide some protection from the often boisterous trades and normal 2 to 4 metre North Easterly swells. Within this area one

We had heard many reports of cruisers being 'harassed' by the local Kuna fishermen and 'Mola' sellers, this proved to be completely false as we found all contacts polite and pleasant. 'Molas' are a delightful form of embroidery utilizing several layers of fabric and intricate stitching, often depicting traditional scenes. They can be

For several weeks we have heard nothing from the international world, the BBC world service has stopped broadcasting, on short wave to here, everyone has internet but us. Around us are dug out canoes from the previous century, one occasionally has an outboard but most are driven by paddles or tiny tattered sails, the occupants are small, strong, smiling and constantly bailing. Some of the islands are completely covered in palm thatched huts, rickety jetties are everywhere along with a ubiquitous thatched enclosure at the end – a toilet. Most islands are just overrun with



Melissa being fitted with the traditional Kuna bracelet.



A traditional Kuna village...